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TAGS: [ECON](#) [EAGR](#) [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [ELAB](#) [CH](#)
SUBJECT: HENAN NPC DELEGATION STRESSES RURAL DEVELOPMENT,
FAMILY PLANNING

REF: A. (A) BEIJING 809
[1](#)B. (B) BEIJING 808
[1](#)C. (C) 06 BEIJING 24171
[1](#)D. (D) BEIJING 750
[1](#)E. (E) 07 BEIJING 7389

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (SBU) Henan's Provincial National People's Congress (NPC) Delegation stressed the importance of rural development and family planning during discussions on March 6 regarding the Government Work Report that Premier Wen Jiabao delivered the previous day (Ref A). Representatives from China's most populous province said taking measures to promote agricultural development and stem population growth would be critical for the province's future. At the meeting chaired by Party Secretary Xu Guangchun, representatives praised Wen's Work Report, with one deputy telling Econoff that Central Government policy is in line with Henan's focus on the basic needs of its nearly 100 million people. Foreign press faced difficulties gaining access to the meeting despite previous assurances from the NPC Press Center that this year's NPC would be more open to the media. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Zhengzhou, Henan's provincial capital, is a Virtual Presence Post (VPP), and Econoff/VP attended the March 6 Provincial NPC Delegation meeting. (Note: Ambassador hosted Henan Party Secretary Xu for lunch on March 5 (Ref B). Henan's GDP grew by 14.5 percent to USD 206.15 billion in 2007 and ranks fifth nationally out of 31 provinces, municipalities, and autonomous regions, but per capita GDP remains relatively low at USD 2,200 and ranks seventeenth. End Note.)

RURAL DEVELOPMENT REMAINS TOP PRIORITY

[1](#)3. (SBU) Discussion at the Henan Provincial NPC Delegation meeting on March 6 focused on rural development. With approximately 70 percent of the province's population in rural areas, Henan deputies said promoting rural development and narrowing the urban-rural income gap remain the province's top priorities. One presenter said the province would continue to promote urbanization (Ref C), but in doing so still would pay close attention to the environmental costs and impact on food security. Henan deputies agreed that improving rural infrastructure, the focus of the State Council's 2008 Number One Document (Ref D), would be critical for the province's continued economic growth.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Note: Rural-to-urban migration also has played a

major role in recent years in Henan's economic development. On his arrival in Beijing for the NPC session, Party Secretary Xu visited a center for Henan migrants who are

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working in Beijing. Xu reportedly stated at that event on March 2 that there currently are 19.5 million Henan residents who are working as migrants in other parts of the country. End Note.

FOCUS ON FAMILY PLANNING

15. (SBU) Following Premier Wen's statement on March 5 that China would continue to carry out the one-child policy in order to maintain a low birthrate and improve maternal and child health (Ref A), Henan deputies followed suit, stating that the one-child policy is critically important for China's most populous province. One deputy said the province should continue to focus on the "quality" of its people by ensuring population growth is slow and there are enough resources to support social services for the entire population. Henan representatives acknowledged that the Provincial Government should take steps to improve the social safety net for the elderly, especially when one adult child often must take care of two elderly parents or even two elderly in-laws.

16. (SBU) Note: A Wall Street Journal article on March 6 also pointed out that the one-child policy has attracted headlines in the run-up to the March session of the NPC, particularly after Zhao Baige, Vice Minister of the National Population and Family Planning Commission, suggested that there might be changes to the policy this year. End Note.

PRAISE FOR THE WORK REPORT

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17. (SBU) Henan NPC Deputies uniformly praised the Government Work Report. (Comment: This is not surprising given the staged nature of many NPC events, but at the same time, we do sometimes hear dissenting views from deputies during NPC delegation meetings. End Comment.) One presenter stated that Henan would continue to promote Hu's Scientific Development Concept (SDC) (see Ref E on the challenges for SDC in Henan Province).

18. (SBU) Li Ya, an NPC Deputy from Xuchang in Henan, told Econoff that the Work Report's focus on social issues and the needs of the people, including its emphasis on rural development, would be particularly important for Henan. Overall, Li said the Work Report was "very good."

MAYBE NOT THAT OPEN TO THE PRESS AFTER ALL...

19. (SBU) Despite repeated assurances by the NPC Press Center that this year's session of the NPC would be more open to the media, foreign journalists (and Econoff) were stopped at the front door of the Great Hall of the People by security and told the Henan Provincial Delegation meeting was not open to the media, even though they had proper credentials and the meeting was listed on the NPC Press Center website as being open to the press. A Third Secretary from the MFA Information Department later apologized to Econoff for the mix-up, but only one foreign journalist managed to cover the meeting, which was the only event open to the media on the morning of March 6.

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